

A TORY ALLY TALKS OF “RIVERS OF BLOOD”

BY RAFAL PANKOWSKI, "NEVER AGAIN" Association,
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In the wake of the UK elections and shortly before the forthcoming Brexit negotiations, European public opinion is again looking at the British Conservatives' choices in terms of their coalition partners and political allies on both the national and the European levels.

The European Parliament is a good place to start. Marek Jurek is a high-profile Member of the European Parliament sitting in the Tory-led European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR).



A well-known figure on the Polish right, he was Speaker of the Polish Parliament in 2005-2007.

Jurek had become notorious internationally back in 1999 when he led a Polish right-wing delegation to London to pay tribute to the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet who was under arrest in the UK for crimes against humanity at that time.

He presented Pinochet with a gorget bearing an image of the Madonna. On his return to Poland he gave interviews in which he said: “We should all be grateful to Pinochet” and dismissed the charges against the murderous dictator by saying that “the

majority of the victims were communists or family members of communists”.

Jurek shocked many once again on 8 June 2017, when he gave an interview to a Polish radical right-wing website Wpoltyce, firmly linking the presence of Muslims in European countries to the recent terrorist attacks and criticising the European Union by making a chilling reference to Enoch Powell's infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech: “The European Union authorities continue their own catastrophic errors and resist changes in Europe. Enoch Powell was not wrong half a century ago in his ‘rivers of blood’ speech when he warned against the flood of millions of immigrants to Europe. At that time the truth was rejected, now we can see the consequences.” He went on to say: “First of all we must stop any further advances of Muslim immigration.”

The 1968 “Rivers of Blood” speech by Enoch Powell belongs to the crudest annals of racism and xenophobia. At the time, Powell was removed from the Conservative shadow cabinet of Edward Heath.

Well into the 21st century, the Tories do not use such language anymore, but they legitimise their allies in the European Parliament who openly engage in the incitement of extremist sentiments.

The Polish right's Islamophobic frenzy is hardly rooted in reality. The Muslim community in Poland amounts to less than 0.1 per cent of the country's population. Nevertheless, the Muslim migrants and other minorities are now a convenient scapegoat for the right.

The ‘NEVER AGAIN’ Association records several hate crime incidents every day. The current xenophobic climate in Poland can be demonstrated by the cancellation of an open door event at a Muslim Cultural Centre in Warsaw on 13 June, just days after Jurek's interview, due to a large number of threats.

The day before, the Polish Parliament's guards prevented a group of high-school pupils from entering the Parliament building for wearing “Refugees Welcome” and gay rights badges. They were there to participate in an official event encouraging youngsters to debate public issues.

<http://hopenothate.org.uk/2017/06/14/tory-ally-talks-rivers-blood/>